



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
March 2026



Friends in Christ:

The novelist, Mark Haddon, writes, “The question is not ‘Is anyone in there?’ but ‘What exists between us?’ Our humanity is not an individual quality that can be measured and traded and celebrated and ignored, but an activity, a thing human beings do together.”

This year during Lent, we’re exploring the encounters that show up throughout scripture and the connections that people make with one another and with God. We’ll read from the Gospel of John in worship to see what happens when Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night and when Jesus encounters a woman at a well in the light of day. We’ll see Jesus making a connection with a man born blind and watch as Jesus weeps with Mary and Martha over their dead brother, Lazarus.

In the 9:15 Sunday morning adult education sessions, we’ll explore the resurrection stories in the four Gospels. We’ll look at the encounters that women and men had with one another, with various messengers of good news, and with the risen Christ as we seek new understanding of the resurrection for our lives today.

Through these encounters, we’ll find new insights into our humanity, the “thing human beings do together.”

Peace,

Bill

WELCOME TO OUR NEW OFFICE MANAGER

The Church Council is happy to announce that we have hired a new office manager, Nancy LeaVesseur. A search committee made up of Bea Hicks, Sharyn Reitz, John Fieselmann, Andy Bertolatus, and Bill Lovin received and reviewed over 20 applications for the position. We personally interviewed the two best candidates.



Nancy was chosen based on her skills, office management experience, and references. We think that Nancy offers what we are looking for in an office manager and that she will be a good fit with our congregation. She will work 20 hours/week, from 9-1, Monday-Friday. Nancy started working on Monday, February 9. We invite members and friends to stop by the church office in the coming weeks to meet her.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



The children sang "To God
March 2026
Christian Education
Sunday, March 1 9:15
Sunday School/Breakfast
Children's Church during
10:15 worship Nursery
9:00-11:30
Sunday, March 8 9:15

March 2026 Christian Education

Sunday, March 1 9:15 Sunday School/Breakfast
Children's Church during 10:15 worship Nursery 9:00-11:30
Sunday, March 8 9:15 Sunday School/Breakfast
Children's Church during 10:15 worship Nursery 9:00-11:30
Sunday, March 15 NO SUNDAY SCHOOL Children's Church during 10:15 worship SMS Nursery Hours Begin 9:00-12:30
Sunday, March 22 9:15 Sunday School Children's Church during 10:15 worship Nursery 9:00-12:30
Sunday, March 29 9:15 Sunday School Children's Church during 10:15 worship Nursery 9:00-12:30



Small & Mighty

February may be a short month but we had two very successful events outside our "ordinary times" calendar in Christian Ed! A special thank you to Tom Mittman, Betsy Henson, Izzy Brown, Kaoru Heitzman and Oscar Lewis for participating and preparing 20 cake kits for donation to the food pantry! Thank you to anyone who brought items to contribute. We talked about spiritual practice, crafted, ate pizza & cake and had a little time for Minute-to-win-it gaming!

Additional thank you's go to the CE Board and everyone who contributed to and attended the Ash Wednesday Soup Supper. It was a wonderful and delicious event followed by a meaningful service. It is events like these where we grow closer as a church family



CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

March 1—Second Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday

March 29—Palm Sunday—Worship with Distribution of Palms; One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

April 2—Maundy Thursday—Worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.; Communion and Service of Tenebrae

April 3—Good Friday—Worship in the Sanctuary at Noon

April 5—Easter Sunday—Easter Sunrise Service led by members of the Confirmation Class at 7:30 a.m. Breakfast follows in Rockwood Hall; Festival Easter Service in the Sanctuary at 10:15 a.m.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On Palm Sunday, March 29, we will dedicate our One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. This offering has long been an important part of the life of our congregation. For many years now, we have been on the list of Top 50 giving churches.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) involves us in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, through our offering, we are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS we engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, our contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put us in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. We meet immediate needs and address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

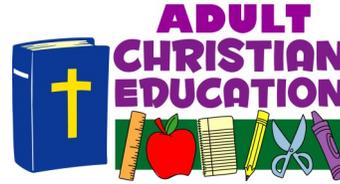
Let us continue this great tradition and give generously.

CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADULT EDUCATION IN MARCH—ENCOUNTERS AT THE TOMB

As we move through Lent this month, the 9:15 Sunday morning adult education sessions will explore the resurrection stories in the four Gospels. Each Gospel gives a different account, but all of them point to encounters that women and men had with one another, with various messengers of good news, and with the risen Christ. We'll look at these connections as we seek new understanding of the resurrection for our lives today.

March 1	Matthew, chapter 28
March 8	Mark, chapter 16
March 15	Luke, chapter 24
March 22	John, chapter 20
March 29	General Discussion

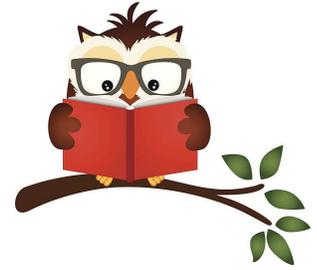


Join Bill Lovin around the fireplace in Rockwood Hall



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS ON SUNDAY, MARCH 8.

Please remember to set your clock ahead one hour on Saturday evening, March 7, so that you get to church on time.



THE WOMEN'S READING GROUP—MARCH 14

The Women's Reading Group are reading and discussing *Holy Envy - Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor. We'll meet from 10-11am in Rockwood Hall the second Saturday of each month through June. If you're interested, contact Marsha Lowe or Rebecca Weatherford or sign-up in Rockwood Hall.

AWE 2 BEGINS ON MARCH 15

After Worship Encounter (AWE) will start up again after worship on Sunday, March 15. We will plan on two multi-week sessions. We will meet for 3 weeks and then take a break on Easter Sunday, April 5. Generally, we gather on the Sundays that the choir meets after worship to rehearse for their Special Music Sunday on May 31.

We will be using *Living the Questions: The Wisdom of Progressive Christianity*. In this study we will be meeting again progressive theologians that were introduced in the original Living the Questions series: Borg, Crossen, and Spong. This is a beginning class that will introduce you to Progressive Christianity.

Rev. Ann Molsberry will be leading the discussions. Please purchase your own book and for Sunday, March 15 read Chapter 8: Restoring Relationships (the first chapter of Section Two: Reconciliation). See you on Sunday, March 15 in the library!



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HOPE LODGE NEWS

Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be Monday, March 16. If you would like to donate to the meal, see the signup sheet in Rockwood Hall.

The American Cancer Society Hope Lodge, which opened in 2008, offers 28 guest rooms located near treatment centers in the area. The program provides a free home away from home for cancer patients and their caregivers. More than just a roof over their heads, it's a nurturing community that helps patients access the care they need. Each Hope Lodge community offers a supportive, homelike environment where guests can share a meal, join in the evening's activities, or unwind in their own private room. Patients staying at a Hope Lodge must be in active cancer treatment.



CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

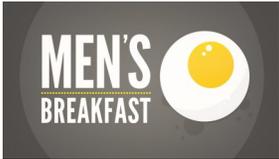
WOMEN'S LUNCH—MARCH 19th

The Women's Lunch will be held at The Hilltop Tavern, on North Dodge St on March 19th at 11:45 a.m. Please call or text Martha Ann Crawford at 319-855-8340 to reserve a seat at the table.



MEN'S BREAKFAST—MARCH 21

The March Men's Breakfast will be held on Saturday, March 21. Sure, we're in the middle of Lent, but join us for sausage, eggs, or whatever you'd like—we're Congregationalists, after all. We'll gather at the Waterfront Hy-Vee at 8:00 a.m. Good food, great people. All Congregational UCC men who eat breakfast are invited. This is a great way to catch up with old friends and meet new friends. Please join us.



A SUSTAINABLE PALM SUNDAY

When we wave palm branches during on Sunday, March 29 (Palm Sunday), we will be using palms that are harvested in ways that are sustainable and that help to improve local communities' standard of living.

Although US palm purchases may reach as high as \$4.5 million each year, the palm harvesters usually earn very little. Families and communities, who rely heavily on palm harvesting for income, represent the poorer segments of the rural populations in the palm-producing areas of Mexico and Guatemala. Eco-palms are harvested in a more sustainable way—harvesters are paid on the quality of their palms rather than the quantity. These communities are also committed to using harvesting practices that minimize the impact on the natural forest. Eco-palm harvesters and community members sort and package the palms themselves and sell their palms directly rather than relying on middlemen. In this way, eco-palms improve local communities' standard of living and ensure that the money paid for the palms benefit those who labor.

YOU CAN HELP WITH THE FREE LUNCH PROGRAM THIS MONTH.

The Free Lunch Program is continuing to serve lunches. Members of Congregational UCC serve on the fifth Monday of any month. Our next serving date is Monday, March 30. If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact Vicki Thomae or the church office.



SOUPER BOWL OF CARING:

Thanks to everyone who gave to the **Souper Bowl of Caring** grassroots hunger relief initiative in February. We received \$325.00, all of which will go to the CommUnity Crisis Center Food Pantry—so everybody won! Thanks again.



SENDING USED MEDICINE BOTTLES TO AFRICA FOR REUSE IN CLINICS

100 Grannies, a local environmental activist group, is sending used plastic medicine bottles to Africa to assist clinics in distributing medication. Donna Hirst is in charge of this project and would be pleased to have participation from members of our congregation. If you are interested, the labels from the plastic bottles need to be removed, and the bottles need to be washed in soapy water. Typically, labels can be peeled off in a matter of seconds from the edges; attempting to wash the labels off tends to make them more difficult to remove. For more information contact donna-hirst@uiowa.edu. She will pick up bottles on Sundays.

More information: A church in Ohio sends medical equipment and supplies to Africa. They use the medicine bottles as packing material. When the bottles are received in Africa they are distributed to clinics in Africa. In 2019 the church sent 1,000,000 bottles to Africa. In 2025 they sent 2 million. Donna sent 6 shipments to Ohio in 2025. She'll be sending many more in 2026 since two churches, 2 nursing homes, and the Grannies are collecting bottles. The list will grow.

Thank you for considering joining this effort.

CHURCH NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Night of 1000 Dinners



Celebrate International Women's Day

Enjoy an International buffet dinner, entertainment, and recognition of women-led organizations advancing UN Sustainable Development Goal #11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Friday, March 6 | 6:00 - 8:00 PM

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
140 Gathering Place Lane, Iowa City, IA

Benefiting:
Immigrant Welcome Network
Housing Fellowship
Shelter House
United Nations Habitat

Tickets:
Community Members: Registration \$50
Students / Limited Income: Registration \$20



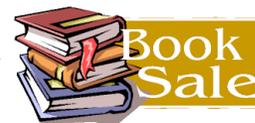
Hosted by the Johnson County United Nations Association

Ticket sales end on March, 1, 2026. Scan QR for more information and to purchase tickets.



SHELTER HOUSE BOOK SALE—MARCH 28-29 860 QUARRY ROAD, CORALVILLE

THE SHELTER HOUSE BOOK SALE will be held March 28 & 29 at 860 Quarry Road (the old Antique Car Museum) in Coralville from 10:30am-4:00pm both days. You can bring your donations of donations of books, CDs, DVDs, and puzzles to that location. Donation times will be every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10:00am-2:00pm, and Sundays from 2:00pm-4:00pm. **YOU CAN ALSO BRING BOOKS TO THE CHURCH AND DROP THEM OFF IN ROCKWOOD HALL AND JOHN FIESELMANN OR DONNA HIRST CAN TAKE THEM FOR YOU.**



Many volunteers are needed to help sort books and help during sale days. Sign up to volunteer at: [Book Sale 2026: Community Volunteers](#).

Each year, Shelter House creates a wonderland of adventure, mystery, and curiosity at the annual Book Sale. Tens of thousands of used books are generously donated by members of the community and sold at low prices to support Shelter House's lifesaving work. This is truly a community fundraiser, as so many community members like you donate books, volunteer their time, and shop for treasures at the Book Sale.

A COMMUNITY READING OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S "A TIME TO BREAK SILENCE"

Martin Luther King delivered his most controversial speech on April 4, 1967. One year later, on April 4, 1968, he was assassinated in Memphis. Come read with us King's 1967 Speech, and excerpts from his last speech on April 3, 1968, "I've Been to the Mountaintop."

Saturday, April 4, 2026. 11AM to 6 PM at the Iowa City Public Library

This event is free and open to the public. Come listen to or read a portion of the speech. The speeches will be repeated several times. Come and go as you wish.

Sponsored by Veterans For Peace, Chapter #161, Eastern Iowa www.vfp161.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING: If you notice something in the building that needs attention—possums in the pews, racoons in Rockwood, a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office know right away. Thanks.



USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES: Each Sunday morning brings opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING? This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship.

Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



ASH WEDNESDAY SOUP SUPPER



CHURCH CALENDAR

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 - 9:00 Choir Rehearsal - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service w/ communion	2	3 -CE Board, 6:00pm - Stewardship Board, 7:00pm Zoom -Mission Board 7:00 PM	4 - 11:00 AM Staff Meeting	5	6	7
8 Daylight Savings Time Begins-9:00 Choir Rehearsal - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service	9	10	11	12	13	14 - Women's Reading Group, 10am in Rockwood Hall
15 - 9:00 Choir - 9:15 Adult Education only - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship Service - 11:30 Choir - 11:30 AWE	16 - Hope Lodge, 5:30pm	17 - Membership, 5:30pm - Deacons meeting, 7pm - Trustees, 7pm	18 - 11:00 AM Staff Meeting	19 - Women's Lunch, 11:45am @ Hilltop Tavern on N. Dodge St, IC	20	21 - Men's Breakfast @ Waterfront HyVee, 8:00 am
22 - 9:00 Choir - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship - 11:30 Choir - 11:30 AWE	23	24 - Council Meeting, 7pm	25	26	27	28
29 Palm Sunday-9:00 Choir - 9:15 Christian Education - Children's Church During Worship - 10:15 Worship - 11:30 Choir - 11:30 AWE	30 - Serve at Free Church Program	31				

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

CELEBRATING MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 3/1 Sandra Lacina**
- 3/4 Barb Hanson**
- 3/5 Lyle Tonne**
- 3/6 Melissa Reynolds**
- 3/10 James Jetter**
- 3/13 Joan Buxton
Izzy Brown**
- 3/15 Sylvia Woolums
Malia Lewis**
- 3/19 Willem Maybaum Morton**
- 3/22 Nathaniel Savage
Chris Lewis**
- 3/23 Isabella Myers**
- 3/24 Carrie Whitaker**
- 3/28 Magnus Woolums**
- 3/31 Nancy LeaVesseur**



ARTICLES FOR THE MARCH NEWSLETTER
are due to the office by Monday, March 24th.



**THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 North Clinton Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52245-1700**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

March 2026 NEWSLETTER



CHURCH STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 am to 1 pm

Phone: 319-337-4301

Visit our Web Site: www.uccic.org

Pastor:

Director of CE

Music Director

Organist

Children's Choir Director

Office Manager

Financial Secretary

Sexton:

Custodian:

The Rev. William Lovin

Hope Spragg

Dr. Chris Nakielski

Bill Crouch

Rachel Burchett

Nancy LeaVesseur

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For up to date announcements, check us out on Facebook.